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3rd ed

The History of the Folk Studies Program
at Western Kentucky University

Timeline

- 1922: Dr. Gordon Wilson, professor of English at Western joins the Kentucky Folklore Society.
- 1928: Dr. Wilson begins teaching the first folklore course at Western. In this same period he begins publication of a periodical, Kentucky Folklore and Poetry.
- 1935: Dr. Wilson begins publication of a newspaper column, "Tid Bits of Kentucky Folklore," which was published weekly in over 100 Kentucky newspapers for 28 years.
- 1950: D.K. Wilgus joins the Western English department faculty.
- 1953: D.K. Wilgus founds the Kentucky Folklife Archive.
- 1955: Kentucky Folklore Record founded and edited by Dr. Wilgus, begins publication. He is also named secretary treasurer of the Kentucky Folklore Society. His work helps to revitalize the organization.
- 1957: Wilgus receives a Simon Guggenheim fellowship to pursue folksong studies.
- 1959: Dr. Wilgus publishes his dissertation: Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898, published by Rutgers University Press. For this work he receives the Chicago Folklore Prize.
- 1960: Dr. Gordon Wilson retires from his teaching position at Western, but continues his study of Kentucky folk culture. In 1962 he publishes Folkways of the Mammoth Cave Region.
- 1961: Dr. Wilgus is named president of the Kentucky Folklore Society; Gordon Wilson is named honorary president.
- 1962-64: Dr. D.K. Wilgus leaves Western to join the faculty at UCLA.
- 1964: Drs. Kenneth and Mary Washington Clarke join Western's English faculty. They co-edit A Folklore Reader, and A Concise Dictionary of Folklore, both published in 1965.
- 1968: Folklore undergraduate minor established in the English department at Western. Dr. Mary Clarke publishes Jesse Stuart's Kentucky, which is awarded second place in the annual Chicago Folklore Prize competition.

1969: Dr. William Lynwood Montell joins Western's faculty. Dr. Montell had served as an assistant professor of history and later Dean of Academic Affairs at Campbellsville College.

1970: Dr. Montell publishes The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study in Oral History.

1970: The Center for Folk and Intercultural Studies is chartered as "an interdisciplinary administrative-academic unit" under the office of Vice President for Academic Affairs. The purpose of the Center was to provide direction and focus for the emerging program in Folk Studies, as well as Afro-American studies, Asian and Latin American studies.

1971: In October, distinguished folklorist Dr. Richard Dorson of Indiana University writes Western's administrators to encourage the development of an M.A. program in Folk Studies at Western.

1972: In February, Folk Studies faculty develop proposal for M.A. program, submit it to administration.

1972: The Western Kentucky Folk Life Society, a student organization, is granted official recognition by the University in March.

1972: In October the Master's program in Folk Studies receives full approval and is admitted as Western's newest graduate degree track.

1973: Dr. Montell is appointed by the governor to advise the Kentucky unit at the Festival of American Folklife presented by the Smithsonian Institute on the national mall in Washington, D.C.

1973: Dr. Kenneth Clarke publishes Uncle Bud Long: The Birth of A Kentucky Folk Legend.

1974: The Center for Intercultural Studies receives departmental status within Potter College. Lynwood Montell named head of new department.

1974: Dr. Camilla Collins joins the faculty of the Folk Studies program.

1974: Dr. Kenneth Clarke publishes The Harvest and the Reapers: Oral Traditions of Kentucky.

1975: Ghosts Along the Cumberland: The Lore of Death, Burial and Ghosts in the Kentucky Foothills by Dr. Montell is published.

1975: Dr. Mary Clarke retires, Dr. Burt Feintuch takes her position. Dr. Feintuch's focus of research is music and public sector folklore.

1976: Folk Studies faculty publish several books as part of the Kentucky Bicentennial Bookshelf series. They include: Kentucky Folk Architecture, by Lynwood Montell and Michael Lynn Morse, Kentucky's Age of Wood by Dr. Kenneth Clarke, and Kentucky Quilts and Their Makers, by the retired Dr. Mary Clarke.

1977: The Center for Intercultural Studies becomes the Department of Folk and Intercultural Studies, and remains in Potter College.

1977: Dr. Camilla Collins is named to the American Folklore Society's Executive Board.

1977-78: Dr. Kenneth Clarke retires and is replaced by Dr. Robert Teske.

1978: A new graduate track is added to the program: Master of Arts in Folk Studies (Historic Preservation). Western becomes the only Folklore graduate program to combine these two disciplines.

1978: Dr. Burt Feintuch and alumni Bruce Green produce a two record set of folk music entitled: I Kind of Believe It's a Gift: Recordings of Traditional Music From Southcentral Kentucky.

1978: Dr. Camilla Collins is named editor of the Kentucky Folklore Record, a position she holds until the journal ceases publication in 1986.

1980-81: Dr. Teske leaves Western after he accepts a position at the National Endowment for the Arts. He is replaced by Dr. Jay Anderson, who's research and teaching focuses on foodways, historic preservation, and the folklore of mass media.

1981: In a period of budget cutbacks, the Department of Folk and Intercultural Studies, is merged with the Department of Foreign Languages to form the new department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Studies.

1981: From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research, is published. Dr. Lynwood Montell and Dr. Barbara Allen co-author the volume.

1982: Montell receives recognition from Western's administrators as an "Outstanding Researcher."

1983: Dr. Jay Anderson publishes Time Machines: The World of Living History.

1983: Montell publishes Don't Go Up Kettle Creek: Verbal Legacy of the Upper Cumberland.

1985: The Folk Studies faculty continues its excellent record in publication with two research-tool volumes: Burt Feintuch's Kentucky Folkmusic: An Annotated Bibliography, and Jay Anderson's Living History Sourcebook.

1985: Dr. Anderson leaves the faculty and is replaced by Dr. Michael Ann Williams. Dr. Williams brings vitality to the Historic Preservation graduate track with her background in vernacular architecture and museum administration.

1986: Dr. Collins takes on the editorship of Southern Folklore, an internationally known journal formerly published at the University of Florida. In addition, Montell publishes Killings: Folk Justice in the Upper South.

1987: Dr. Montell is appointed general editor of a new book series on folklife in the South by the University Press of Mississippi. In addition, he contracts with the University Press of Kentucky to co-edit a new book series on the Ohio River Valley.

1989: Dr. Cheryl Keyes, an ethnomusicologist and a leading authority on rap music, joins the faculty. Dr. Montell is named a fellow to the American Folklore Society.

1991: Folk Studies is accorded the distinction of being the only program in Potter College designated as significant for the future of Western, according to Western XXI, a University planning study.

1991: Dr. Michael Ann Williams publishes her vernacular architecture study entitled Homeplace: The Social Use and Meaning of the Folk Dwelling in Southwestern North Carolina, and Montell publishes his study of gospel music, Singing The Glory Down.

1992: Dr. Cheryl Keyes receives a Ford Foundation fellowship at New York University for the purpose of preparing her dissertation on rap music for publication. She is replaced by Dr. Johnston A.K. Njoku.